

From the Desk of an Eternal Optimist: An Open Letter to Conservatives

Dear Fellow Conservative:

Election Day 2008 produced a liberal governing majority that no one envisioned even as little as two years ago. The Democrats control both chambers of Congress as well as the Presidency. And while they are motivated by politics rather than solutions, Americans perceive them as the true agents of change and reform.

Buried within election data is troubling news. The Republican Party is losing grassroots support, and conservatives are peeling away from the party. According to exit polls, one-in-five self-identified conservatives voted for Barack Obama, clearly illustrating the Republican Party's inability to project conservative values with credibility.

And this reality has been manifested into a set of greater truths: Americans in 2009 believe that Republicans are tied to the status quo, cannot be trusted on the issues that matter most to them, and are incoherent when articulating a positive vision for the future.

But in light of this, I believe Republicans, by firmly embracing conservative solutions-based traditions, can rise again and set the best course for America. From the desk of an eternal optimist, better days are ahead.

Before coming to Congress, I helped transform the Republican Party in the State of Georgia from permanent minority party status to a governing, conservative, principled and solutions-based majority. Now, it is some of the most fertile ground for conservatives in the nation. This happened in Georgia because of a commitment to what is at the core of leadership: to lead with principle! Yet right now, conservatives are correct about a Washington in which too few are fighting consistently for their values and concerns.

The Republican Party is at its best when its leadership has a bold vision and is rooted to conservative principles: personal responsibility, liberty, limited government, traditional values, providing for the common defense, and optimism about the future. But Republicans seem to have lost the ability to intelligently or ideologically define these principles and convey them to the American people.

Moreover, elected conservative leaders need to act immediately in order to facilitate the rebuilding of the Republican Party and reconnect it to the conservative movement.

- **Back to basics:** The first step starts with a little bit of self-reflection and “re-learning” the core principles of conservatism. Only through understanding the past can our core principles be applied and developed into meaningful solutions to tackle the challenges facing America.
- **Party of Solutions:** A new Republican platform of ideas and language must be created and championed, built on a foundation of conservative solutions. It will also need to be built from the ground up from fresh and innovative ideas.
- **Rebuild the party's infrastructure and coalitions:** There must be a specific focus on nurturing the grassroots, shoring up ties with existing coalitions and leading thinkers, and creating new infrastructure to meet the challenges of politicking in a new century.

- **Hold Democrats accountable:** This begins with a proactive and coordinated strategy between elected conservative leaders and outside allies. Americans need to be reminded on a daily basis that Democrats want to play politics and centralize power, raise taxes, cut defense spending, and undermine traditional values.
- **Go on offense, engage and educate:** Yes, Virginia, someone in Washington is fighting for you. And when Republicans stay on offense and engage, then it garners attention and provides opportunities to educate every American on conservative solutions that work. Look no further than the Energy Revolt on the floor of the House of Representatives this past August which gave Republicans a needed voice and identity.
- **Remain unified and disciplined:** Hostile Democrat majorities and liberal special interests are more energized than they have been in decades. Without unity and discipline, the differences between the two parties become blurred, and conservatives have every right to question allegiance to Republicans.
- **Reclaim the American lexicon:** Democrats have been successful in altering the mindset of what made this nation great through language and institutions. Once, Americans valued “responsibility,” “self-determination,” and “hard work.” Now, these ideals have been replaced by fuzzy appeals to “diversity,” “fairness,” and “social justice.” No longer can Republicans cede the language or institutions.
- **Broaden the appeal:** Republicans win elections when they run on an across-the-board conservative solutions-based agenda. However, the appeal must be broadened to acknowledge and embrace the demographics in our country. Failure to do so will relegate the party to permanent minority status.

My letter ends with a direct appeal to you. With continued optimism and clarity of purpose, action can be taken to rebuild the Republican Party, reconnect it to its conservative roots and provide the solutions to tackle the challenges facing America. Last week’s principled and unified opposition to a big-government spending spree that would mortgage our nation’s future and prolong economic strife was just the beginning. Please join me and set us on the course for a better tomorrow.

Yours truly,

Tom Price, M.D.

Congressman Tom Price represents Georgia’s Sixth Congressional District serves as Chairman of the Republican Study Committee (Sign up for e-newsletters at rsc.price.house.gov)